

PRISON
REFORM
TRUST



Transforming Lives (Wales)

reducing women's imprisonment



Soroptimist International (SI) is the only women's service organisation with general consultative status at the United Nations. Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through their programmes and voluntary work. Members are women of all ages, cultures and ethnic groups, who join their local clubs to give service to women and girls. Each club identifies the needs of its community, then establishes specific projects to address those needs. Clubs are grouped into Regions within the UK. The UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) provides help and guidance on project work to Soroptimist clubs in the UK.

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The work of the Prison Reform Trust is aimed at creating a just, humane and effective penal system. We do this by inquiring into the workings of the system; informing prisoners, staff and the wider public; and by influencing Parliament, government, and officials towards reform. The Prison Reform Trust's three year programme (2012-2015) to reduce women's imprisonment in the UK is supported by the Pilgrim Trust: www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/women

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FOREWORD

Soroptimist International is a women's voluntary organisation "Inspiring Action and Transforming Lives" around the world. Since the UK Programme Action Committee took the decision in December 2011 to mount a campaign in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust to reduce women's imprisonment, members from all of our 17 Regions across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have been working to increase awareness of how women are treated in the criminal justice system. We hope that the information gathered in this report will inspire the changes necessary to provide more community-based solutions to women's minor offending. This would reduce the damage and disruption to the lives of so many women and children. Preventing violence against women has been at the core of Soroptimist project work for many years, and having learnt that it is so often an underlying factor in women's offending, we welcomed this opportunity to provide a voice for women who, very often, are victims themselves.

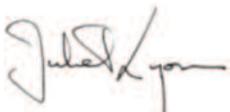
I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this report and look forward to ensuring that it does help inspire action and transform the lives of women whose needs have been overlooked and unmet in the past.

Kay Richmond

Kay Richmond, Chairman
Soroptimist International UK Programme Action Committee

This report is a distillation of the wealth of information on the state of women's justice that Soroptimists have gathered since the launch of the Reducing Women's Imprisonment Action Pack in 2013. It presents a mixed picture, profiling some excellent local practice whilst highlighting a lack of consistency and a dearth of services in many parts of the UK that would enable women to address the causes of their offending and get out of trouble. It is invaluable in mapping some critical gaps in service provision for vulnerable women, and in identifying disconnects between policy and practice.

The recommendations that we make reflect the evidence gathered strategically by Soroptimists and cross-refer to other work to reduce women's imprisonment, including our *Brighter Futures* report. Trustees and staff are delighted that the Prison Reform Trust's partnership with Soroptimist UKPAC is proving to be such a productive one. Soroptimists not only have impressive local and regional reach through their many active clubs across the UK but they also have a reputation as effective lobbyists nationally and internationally on behalf of women. I am therefore confident that this report will be a spur to action that will see long overdue reforms to women's justice.



Juliet Lyon CBE, Director,
Prison Reform Trust

...[T]he government is committed to a vision of fewer women offending, and to more women being punished in the community where it is safe and appropriate to do so. I was therefore very interested to learn of the Soroptimists' and Prison Reform Trust campaign...

... if we are to rehabilitate female offenders, we must take proper account of the realities of their lives and ensure that resources are best targeted to help more women turn their lives around.

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Justice¹

As a result of their nature and levels of offending women are disproportionately affected by short term custodial sentences...The IOM Cymru Women Offender Pathfinder has been established...to ensure the development of a whole system approach to reducing female offending across Wales.

Wales Reducing Reoffending Strategy 2014-2016²

For me, it is not necessarily about creating new pilots or short-term initiatives; it is about ensuring that we recognise and respond to the particular needs of women as a normal part of everything we do within the justice system...

David Ford MLA, Minister of Justice in Northern Ireland³

I share the [Angiolini] Commission's determination to improve the outcomes for women offenders across the criminal justice system. It is, however, important to recognise that there are a number of areas where progress will require substantial input and support from services outwith the criminal justice system if we are to deliver the changes the Commission recommended.

Kenny MacAskill MSP, then Cabinet Secretary for Justice in Scotland⁴

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT

In December 2011 the Soroptimist International UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) took the decision to work in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust to reduce women's imprisonment across the UK. The decision reflected concern that women who have committed petty and non-violent offences are unnecessarily and disproportionately imprisoned when community solutions are often more effective and less damaging for children and families. The project also ties in with Soroptimists' flagship project Violence Against Women – Stop It Now,⁵ as abusive and coercive relationships are a significant driver to women's offending, and a majority of women in prison report having been abused at some point in their life.

In April 2013 the Soroptimists' *Action Pack on Reducing Women's Imprisonment* was launched at Westminster, followed by launches at the Pierhead in Cardiff and Holyrood in Edinburgh, with a call for renewed efforts in each UK nation to improve justice outcomes for women. As Jan Hemlin, then Chair of UKPAC, said:

The Soroptimists are uniquely placed to gather much-needed information and add a strong voice from communities across the UK to press for, and achieve long-awaited change. Our members are committed to ensuring more constructive responses across the country to women who come into contact with the criminal justice system, many of whom are involved in non-violent, petty offending and have been victims themselves.

This report, based on information gathered by Soroptimists across the UK in 2013-14 about what happens in their local areas to women who offend, or are at risk of offending, highlights progress and good practice whilst identifying constraints, gaps and shortcomings in local service provision. We are grateful to the hundreds of Soroptimists who have done so much to raise awareness of the over-imprisonment of women in the UK and the consequences for children and families, and contribute to progress towards a more effective and humane approach to women's justice.

The Soroptimists' 2013-14 inquiry

In 2013-14 Soroptimists belonging to 139 SI clubs across the United Kingdom asked police officers, probation officers, criminal justice social workers, magistrates, sheriffs, health professionals and managers of community services for women for the following information:

- What systems and safeguards are in place, at each stage of the criminal justice process, to ensure appropriate responses to women who have committed, or are suspected of committing, an offence?
- What women-specific services are available in the local community to support those processes, and to help women avoid getting into trouble in the first place?

The agreed objectives of local information gathering by clubs were to:

- find out if there is effective multi-agency work being done in their area to reduce the number of women who end up in prison for petty non-violent offences
- identify local examples of good practice that deliver positive outcomes for women and their children, families and communities
- establish whether there are robust alternatives to custody available to and used by local sentencers
- explain what may be inhibiting the development or spread of good practice.

Information was obtained through face-to-face or telephone interviews, at local meetings and regional conferences organised by SI clubs, and by means of postal questionnaires and Freedom of Information Act requests. In particular, Soroptimists sought to identify the extent to which training, protocols, procedures and services are tailored to meet the needs and characteristics of women offenders.

The information gathered by SI members is not exhaustive, but it gives a unique snapshot of variable practice and uneven progress across the country as well as the insights of frontline professionals into what improvements are needed. The project served to raise awareness amongst Soroptimists themselves of the difficulties faced by vulnerable women in their local community. SI members have in turn raised awareness amongst local politicians, other community groups and the wider public through letters, meetings and local media coverage.

This is in addition to voluntary work, donations and awareness-raising that many Soroptimists across the country are engaged in to support vulnerable women in their local communities who have become involved with the criminal justice system.

Achieving change

In addition to local awareness raising and information gathering, Soroptimists have played a key role in achieving, for the first time, a statutory foothold for women-specific provision in the criminal justice system in England and Wales. Letters from Soroptimists to their local MPs helped to secure support for a 'women's amendment' to the Crime and Courts Bill in England and Wales in 2012-13. This resulted eventually in a government amendment to the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 (Section 10) which commenced on 1 June 2014 and will help ensure women's needs are identified and addressed in the criminal justice system.

During the course of the Soroptimists' inquiry, in response to the questions frequently asked of them, the Prison Reform Trust produced *Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment?* a briefing which has proved a valuable resource for work in England and Wales and is regularly

updated.⁶ In Scotland, Soroptimists joined with the Prison Reform Trust, the Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending (SWGWO) and the eight Scottish Community Justice Authorities to publish and disseminate a leaflet entitled *Women in the Criminal Justice System in Scotland: the Facts*⁷ as a tool to raise awareness.

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) has special consultative status at the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) enabling it to submit information to any of ECOSEC's committees and commissions. Members met with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women during her mission to the UK, which included visits to a number of women's prisons. The Rapporteur issued a statement emphasising the need to "develop gender-specific sentencing alternatives and to recognise women's histories of victimisation when making decisions about incarceration."⁸

How the report is organised

Information gathered, findings and recommendations are presented in distinct country reports for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and within each country report the material is organised thematically. The Annexes at the end provide further detail of activities undertaken and work done by individual SI Clubs and regions, from lobbying local MPs and councillors about funding for women's services and providing voluntary support to these services, to organising workshops and conferences and engaging with local media.

KEY FINDINGS

Whilst Soroptimists encountered differences in governance and approach to women in the criminal justice system between the four nations, a number of themes (many of them inter-linked) were common across the UK.

UK-wide themes

Leadership is needed to bridge the disconnect between policy and implementation

Despite commitments to reforming women's justice voiced by politicians of every stripe, a leadership deficit has meant UK-wide change has not been delivered. This is all the more surprising given the degree of political consensus that exists over the effectiveness of women-specific responses to offending and the case for reducing the women's prison population. Failure to capitalise on this consensus is indicative of the need for high-level political leadership across each of the UK nations.

Gender-specific approaches are the exception but should be the rule

Equality law requires specific treatment for groups with protected characteristics where this has been shown to be more effective in meeting their needs. Despite the evidence that women-specific responses to offending are cost-effective and reduce reoffending, enabling women to live healthier, more productive lives, most women in contact with criminal justice agencies across the UK are still subject to generic systems and practices which have evolved in response to men's offending. Soroptimists encountered instances, particularly in their dealings with the police, where equality law was routinely misinterpreted as requiring a gender neutral approach. If gender-specific approaches to women's offending are to be mainstreamed, all agencies and frontline staff working with women in trouble must understand and accept the basic principle that equal treatment does not mean the same treatment for everyone. Public sector duties and anti-discrimination law should be clarified and enforced.

Uncertain funding of services working with women in trouble is counter-productive

Despite operating across jurisdictions characterised by their differences rather than similarities, the community services identified in the course of Soroptimists' inquiries shared an uncertain funding future and were at the mercy of budget cuts and short-term funding decisions. In each of the nations, services were expected to do more with less. In some parts of the country, services women could ill afford to lose were at risk of closing. In others, last-minute funding extensions had been granted, but in the long-term, the expectation was that services would demonstrate their worth locally and be commissioned and funded from mainstream grants and budgets. Historically, services working with vulnerable women and women in trouble have been over-looked because of the minority status of women in the criminal justice system. It is unlikely that this will change without a coherent funding strategy.

Attitudes to women in trouble are perceived as barriers to progress

Soroptimists around the UK found evidence that political, media and some public attitudes towards women in trouble are barriers to reform. In England contributors noted that an emphasis on "being tough on crime", dispensing harsh justice and punitive sentencing reflected a lack of understanding of women's lives and had a distorting effect on criminal justice responses to women's offending. In Wales, practitioners thought women offenders were an

unpopular group and that a general unwillingness to look at the causes of, and solutions to, women's offending requires a cultural shift across criminal justice agencies and the wider public. Practitioners in Scotland also identified public perceptions of women offenders as one of the key challenges facing women's justice, with the need to challenge employers' attitudes towards women offenders cited. Despite these concerns, evidence from public opinion polling has found that attitudes towards women who offend, and support for effective responses, are more nuanced, with strong public support for community solutions to the drivers to women's offending.⁹ That this dichotomy exists suggests the need for strong leadership across governments and local agencies in making the case for women in trouble.

There are clear opportunities to reduce the women's prison population

Soroptimists identified common drivers to custody that if tackled, could deliver reductions in the number of women imprisoned in the UK. Whilst limited availability of women-specific community orders was cited as a reason sentencers felt they had no option but to impose custodial sentences, poor-information sharing about services available locally hampered take-up of women-specific orders where they did exist. Some services had sought to address this by involving local sentencers in management boards but a more systematic approach is needed if women's community services are to fulfil their potential as alternatives to custody. Simple practical measures, such as a local directory of services to which sentencers can refer women, would go a long way to addressing the information-deficit.

Whilst the small number of women (relative to men) in contact with criminal justice agencies is often cited as a barrier to reform, it also presents opportunities as small-scale but targeted action could lead to significant change. In each of the nations, the use of custodial remand in lieu of community alternatives was a significant driver to women's imprisonment, despite evidence that many remanded women are given community orders on conviction. Extension of the 'no real prospect' device introduced in England and Wales to Northern Ireland and Scotland would begin to address overuse of remand whilst strategic expansion of approved premises provision in England would address sentencers' concerns about women in insecure or unsafe accommodation. Likewise, restricting use of custody for non-violent crimes would go some way to addressing the disproportionate number of women imprisoned in the UK for such offences.

Soroptimists across the UK were particularly concerned by the large number of women in prison who were mothers, and found little evidence that criminal justice agencies made adjustments to accommodate women with dependents (e.g. childcare provision or interventions scheduled around nursery or school hours). Imprisoning mothers is counter-productive and costly to the state, both in the short and long-term, and could often be avoided if courts took proper account of primary caring responsibilities in sentencing decisions, and women were supported to stay with their children. Removing the availability of custody for breaching community orders where this is the result of women's child-caring responsibilities would be a step in the right direction.

Sharing learning across jurisdictions is important

As this report demonstrates, women in contact with criminal justice agencies across the UK have much in common, and it stands to reason that, despite different approaches and legal systems, lessons which are drawn from what works in one corner of the UK will apply equally across the rest of the country. In the course of their inquiries, Soroptimists uncovered pockets of interesting practice, innovative approaches to funding and examples of integration which need to be applied more widely. Sharing learning across jurisdictions would not only ensure the spread of effective practice, but also protect against the temptation to reinvent the wheel when working with women in trouble in different parts of the country. As this report finds, what works with women in the criminal justice system is in evidence across the UK. The challenge is now to take that learning and turn it into standard practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations have been developed by the Prison Reform Trust to reflect the evidence gathered by Soroptimists. They draw on Soroptimists' findings of both good practice and uneven spread of women-centred policy, practice and legislation already in operation in parts of the country and are designed to improve consistency across the UK. If implemented, these recommendations would reform women's justice and deliver welcome reductions in the imprisonment of women in the UK.

ENGLAND

- The Minister for Female Offenders (Ministry of Justice) and the Minister for Women and Equalities (Government Equalities Office) should promote a gender-informed approach to women in the criminal justice system and lead a cross-government strategy for reform of women's justice.
- Guidance should be developed by lead agencies, including the police, health and local authorities, to ensure policy and practice is compliant with equalities legislation. All mandatory staff training should include statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Criminal justice inspectorates and regulators should monitor and report on the provision of local women-specific measures, especially in light of Section 10 of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 2014. The Joint inspectorate review *Equal but different?* is an excellent example.
- A national network of women-specific community services, including multi-agency one-stop shops and outreach services, should be funded by government, drawing on cross-departmental budgets on three to five year funding cycles and building in savings from the re-rolling or closure of women's prisons.
- Measures of effectiveness against which these services are evaluated should capture distance travelled by women accessing them, as well as binary reoffending rates, to ensure wider outcomes and cost benefits can be evidenced.

- Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), in consultation with the police, council and service providers, should develop directories of local services for women offenders. Information on services available locally should be shared with the National Probation Service to inform pre-sentence reports and sentence recommendations.
- Each Bench should appoint a women's champion responsible for ensuring that all magistrates are aware of local programmes and interventions for women offenders.
- Women's centres should take all possible steps to ensure regular contact and information exchange with local courts, and consider inviting members of the local judiciary to join their governance structures.
- All local courts but especially those with access to a women's centre should consider developing a problem-solving pilot for women's justice.
- All agencies should undertake gender monitoring, analysis and evaluation as part of routine data collection. This should be used to develop a detailed and robust analysis of the needs of women offenders and those at risk of offending in their area, and to evidence the case for co-ordinated multi-agency responses to women's offending, including women-specific services and community disposals in their area.
- Learning from successful multi-agency approaches in some areas should inform the national roll-out of coordinated responses to women in the criminal justice system.
- Health and Wellbeing Boards, Reducing Reoffending Boards, Local Criminal Justice Boards and other multi-agency partnerships, should appoint a women's champion with responsibility for developing effective partnership-working locally.
- The College of Policing should develop national guidance identifying good practice when working with women offenders. This should include appointment of a designated women's lead in each force, adopting a women-specific approach to risk assessment, staff training, diversionary measures and referral to local support services.
- Police training, protocols and diversionary measures concerning or aimed at vulnerable people more generally should take explicit account of women's specific needs and characteristics. Learning from protocols on the treatment of women victims of crime should be applied to the treatment of women offenders to tackle the artificial distinction often made between these groups, and improve outcomes for women.
- The Ministry of Justice should undertake an annual audit and evaluation of probation services provided in accordance with Section 10 of the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 to meet the particular needs of female offenders.

- The development of restorative justice options for women offenders should be explored, with a view to expanding its use for women at all stages of the criminal justice system. The Restorative Justice Council should be asked to put costed proposals to the Advisory Board on Female Offenders.
- A national review of Approved Premises for women should be undertaken urgently, with ring-fenced funding made available to plug gaps identified.
- Local authorities and housing associations should give housing priority to women with vulnerabilities that put them at risk of offending – including women affected by abusive relationships, drug or alcohol problems, or poor mental health.
- Local strategies to reduce women’s offending and imprisonment should take account of women’s housing needs, including the needs of those with dependent children and the consequences for children of lack of stable, secure homes, drawing on data identified in local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.
- The time limit for eligibility for housing benefit for sentenced prisoners should be extended from 13 weeks to six months to prevent short-sentenced women from losing their home.
- The government should develop a strategy to increase employment opportunities and programmes for women with a criminal record. This should include employer incentives.
- A model for providing services to women in rural areas should be developed, piloted and evaluated by National Offender Management Service (NOMS), in collaboration with existing service providers, drawing on the success of the hub approach and use of mobile facilities attached to regional women’s centres. Pooled budgets provide an opportunity to ensure cross-departmental buy-in, and long-term sustainability.
- Women attending court, and those subject to court orders in the community, should have access to childcare facilities if needed.
- Women should not be breached for failing to attend probation appointments where this is a direct result of their caring responsibilities.
- Much more regard should be had to the needs of children whose mothers are caught up in the criminal justice system and steps taken by all relevant agencies to mitigate the impact.

WALES

- A Welsh government Minister should be designated to lead development of the All-Wales Women's Pathfinder project, including ensuring it is adequately resourced, the pan-Wales roll-out happens as planned and its objective of improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system is met.
- The College of Policing should develop national guidance identifying good practice when working with women offenders. This should include appointment of a designated women's lead in each force, adopting a women-specific approach to risk assessment, staff training, diversionary measures and referral to local support services. Best practice models identified by the Women's Pathfinder should be applied pan-Wales as soon as possible.
- Police training, protocols and diversionary measures concerning or aimed at vulnerable people more generally should take explicit account of women's specific needs and characteristics. Lessons learned from protocols on the treatment of women victims of crime should be applied to the treatment of women offenders to tackle the artificial distinction often made between these groups, and improve outcomes for women.
- A national network of women-specific community services, including multi-agency one-stop shops and outreach services, should be funded by government, drawing on cross-departmental budgets on three to five year funding cycles.
- Measures of their effectiveness in working with women offenders and evaluation models should be built into funding agreements, taking account of the methodological difficulties inherent in building an evidence base with small numbers of women.
- Priority should be given to setting up adequate Approved Premises for women in Wales.
- Generic health, housing and other support services should monitor and evaluate take-up and impact by gender.
- Health services, including mental health and substance misuse, must recognise and address women's distinct needs and characteristics.
- The Welsh government should undertake an audit of Local Health Board provision delivered as part of criminal justice liaison services to ensure Boards are providing the minimum level of services required by guidance and the distinct needs of women are identified and met.
- Health services aligned to the Offender Mental Health Care Pathway should recognise women's journey through the criminal justice system as it differs to men's and provide access points reflecting this distinction.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) should adopt a clear force-wide strategy and protocols for working with women, and provide mandatory training for police officers and staff on women-specific approaches.
- PSNI should develop a directory of services to which women offenders can be referred.
- Every effort should be made to maintain and extend services based on the Inspire model, building on the project's success to date and developing valuable evidence of the effectiveness of provision in rural areas. A cost-benefit study by Department of Justice for Northern Ireland (DOJNI) would likely support expansion of this service.
- Funding to replace Ash House should be allocated as a matter of urgency and a date set for its closure and replacement with a small separate women's facility.
- A legislative vehicle to introduce a 'no real prospect' test should be sought at the earliest opportunity to tackle the overuse of remand for women.
- Drawing on the success of youth conferencing for young offenders in Northern Ireland, a restorative justice order should be developed for use by the courts as an alternative to custody for women.

SCOTLAND

- Police Scotland should develop force-wide training for all staff, particularly custody suite and frontline officers, which promotes understanding of the need for and legitimacy of a gender-informed approach to working with women offenders. Training should be underpinned by protocols and guidance, making clear the links between experience of domestic abuse and women's offending, and the likelihood that for some victims of domestic abuse, their first contact with the police may be as a suspect/offender.
- Women-specific diversionary approaches, working in conjunction with existing community provision including Community Justice Centres, should be introduced Scotland-wide.
- Following its acceptance of the Angiolini Commission's recommendation,¹⁰ the Scottish government should legislate to enable police to divert women offenders from prosecution and into rehabilitative services as part of a conditional caution. This should be done at the earliest opportunity and before the next election.

- The Scottish government should scale back its proposal to build a new national women's prison at HMP Inverclyde. Much of the cost of building a new prison would be better spent on embedding and expanding community alternatives to custody, and ensuring imprisonment is used as a last resort. If sufficient focus was given to community alternatives a smaller facility at HMP Inverclyde would be all that is required.
- Community Justice Authorities, in conjunction with Criminal Justice Social Work Services and women-specific service providers, should develop local resources for use by sheriffs and other court users, detailing the availability of local services and alternative sanctions for women offenders.
- The Scottish government should legislate to restrict the use of remand where there is no real prospect of the offender/defendant receiving a custodial sentence on conviction.
- The Judicial Institute for Scotland should review its training for JPs and sheriffs on women in the criminal justice system in accordance with the Angiolini Commission's recommendation.
- There should be a presumption against remanding into custody or imprisoning women with dependent children and against use of short sentences, which can lead to loss of housing and employment, in favour of community alternatives where appropriate.
- Local authorities should ensure their Criminal Justice Social Work Service provides women-specific services. In rural communities, virtual hubs or mobile outreach services should be developed.
- Following the extension of funding for the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund (RRCF) to 2017, the government should undertake an audit of funding for other services for women offenders with a view to providing ring-fenced funding, on a three-year basis, to ensure their sustainability beyond March 2015.
- Where a service model has a robust evidence base for reducing women's reoffending and achieving positive outcomes for women and their families, this success should not be jeopardised by 'diluting the model'.

COUNTRY REPORT - WALES

*Turnaround is supporting YOU and what you want, not your addictions and your failures, the whole point of it is pushing you forward...they inspire you to turn your life around, and it's your life and it's not all about the amount you've drunk or the amount of drugs you've took, or the bad deeds you've done, it's about moving you forward...that's the difference between Turnaround and [other organisations].
Turnaround is a crutch, they cover all areas, they give you that support.*

Service user, Women's Turnaround Service in North Wales¹⁰

FACTS

Use and effectiveness of prison and community sentencing

Numbers in prison - At December 2013, 256 Welsh women were in prison. In 2012-13, 510 Welsh women were sentenced to custody.¹¹

Community orders - In 2012-13, 1,234 women started a community order in Wales.¹²

Distance from home for women in prison - The average distance from home for Welsh women in custody varies widely. For those in HMP Eastwood Park it is around 64 miles, but ranges from 30 miles for those from Newport to 148 miles for women from Fishguard. Women from North Wales are likely to be imprisoned in HMP Styal, 48 miles from Wrexham and 127 miles from Aberystwyth. Although fewer Welsh women are imprisoned in London, the distances are daunting, with Cardiff 153 miles away and Anglesey 286 miles away.

Table 1: Welsh women in prison, December 2013 by prison¹³

Prison	Number of women from Wales
Eastwood Park	131
Drake Hall	39
Styal	30
Send	18
Low Newton	7
Bronzefield	6
Holloway	6
Askham Grange, East Sutton Park, Foston Hall, New Hall Peterborough (female)	<5 each
Total	256

Reoffending rates - The reoffending rate for women who started a Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order with Wales Probation in 2011 was approximately 30%, or 506 of 1,688 women. This is similar to the England and Wales average of 27.8%.¹⁴

Prison receptions data, sentence length and types of offence - In March 2014 Madeleine Moon MP (Bridgend) tabled a parliamentary question requesting data on Welsh women received into prison, the average length of custodial sentences and types of offences committed. The request was refused on the grounds of cost.¹⁵ Without this information, it is difficult to target efforts to reduce the imprisonment of Welsh women.

THE SOROPTIMISTS' INQUIRY IN WALES

Twenty-four SI clubs across Wales took part in campaign activities in 2013-14. Information was collected from local police, probation services, Local Health Boards, courts, women's centres and other agencies by various means, including attending meetings, and at a well-attended Action Research workshop held by SI Wales South in December 2013.

POLICY CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

Criminal justice and the treatment of offenders are not devolved in Wales and so are subject to the Westminster government's strategy on women's justice¹⁶ and the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms.¹⁷ Some changes have been proposed by the recent Silk Commission on Devolution in Wales that could have future implications for the treatment of Welsh women offenders.¹⁸ The Welsh Affairs House of Commons Select Committee is considering the proposals in its inquiry into prisons in Wales and treatment of Welsh offenders, due to report in 2015.¹⁹

In its *Reducing Reoffending Strategy 2014-2016*,²⁰ the Welsh government recognises the need for government departments and agencies outside the criminal justice system to work together, and with non-devolved criminal justice agencies, to reduce reoffending.

*The strategy brings together the ambitions of criminal and social justice agencies to reduce crime by reducing reoffending, and provides a framework to support our programme for government commitment to improving community safety.*²¹

Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) explains this further:

*NOMS directly commissions offender services costing approximately £140 million in Wales. While NOMS...[commissions] prison and probation services in Wales, the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh government are accountable for a wide range of devolved responsibilities which contribute to the rehabilitation of offenders. These include health and social services, learning and skills, housing and local government.*²²

In relation to women offenders, NOMS' Commissioning Intentions for 2014 state:

*Work with the Welsh government will include a particular focus on...supporting vulnerable women who are at risk of offending and improving access to appropriate support services to reduce the numbers of women who reoffend.*²³

Police

Police services in Wales are delivered by four police forces – Dyfed-Powys, South Wales, Gwent and North Wales, each with an elected Police and Crime Commissioner. All forces are partners in the IOM Cymru Women's Pathfinder project (see below).

Probation

The Wales Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and Wales National Probation Service (NPS), which replaced Wales Probation Trust in June 2014, provide probation services in Wales. Wales CRC oversees community-based rehabilitation while high-risk offenders, victim liaison and sentencing advice and reports are managed by the NPS (NOMS in Wales).²⁴ One of the Probation Trust's measures of success for 2013-16 was that "access to services for women offenders in Wales is enhanced through a co-ordinated IOM approach, improving resettlement outcomes and promoting desistance."²⁵

Prison and Approved Premises

There are no women's prisons in Wales, and the lack of women-only Approved Premises has been the subject of a legal challenge.²⁶

Women who are imprisoned will be sent to England and Welsh language provision in custody is poor or non-existent.

SI South Caernarfon

The distance from home makes it particularly difficult for women prisoners from Wales to maintain contact with family and resettle in their community after release. NOMS recognise this:

*We are working to improve resettlement outcomes for prisoners from Wales held in prisons in England. There is a particular focus in relation to the rehabilitation of women offenders and resettlement of women back to their communities in Wales.*²⁷

Following the custodial estate review, Welsh women sentenced to prison are to be held in HMP Eastwood Park (Gloucestershire) or HMP Styal (Cheshire) for as much of their sentence as possible, with the two prisons working closely together to improve responses to Welsh women's needs.¹⁰⁴ As the Prison Reform Trust argued in its submission to the Welsh Affairs Committee's inquiry, the priority should be improving community solutions to women's offending in Wales and addressing the causes, rather than building a women's prison in Wales.²⁹

Criminal Justice Liaison Service

In November 2013 the Welsh government launched revised guidance to help police and court staff identify people who have a mental health problem, personality disorder, learning disability or difficulty, or other complex needs. The guidance sets out the minimum levels of criminal

justice liaison service (similar to Liaison and Diversion services in England) required in all Local Health Board areas. Health Minister Mark Drakeford AM commented:

Public protection and the safeguarding of individuals are of paramount concern, however many offenders with a mental health problem or a learning disability are vulnerable because of those conditions and by addressing their needs we help both the offender and also improve public safety.³⁰

Soroptimists welcome the emphasis on screening and early intervention but would like to see more recognition in the guidance of women's distinct needs.

KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key themes emerged from the Soroptimists' inquiry:

- 1 the All-Wales IOM Cymru women's pathfinder is an inspiring new development
- 2 the approach advocated by the Women's Pathfinder has yet to influence much of the police response to women offenders
- 3 despite support for women's community services funding is limited and short-term and rural provision is a challenge
- 4 there is a lack of women-specific health services.

1) The All-Wales IOM Cymru women's pathfinder is an inspiring new development

The IOM Cymru Women's Pathfinder project (see below) builds on other initiatives developed in 2013 in the Swansea, Neath, Port Talbot and Bridgend area by Wales Probation (now Wales CRC), including:

- a women's reporting centre set up for women offenders to attend their probation appointments in a women-only environment with women staff
- a women's specified activity requirement (W-SAR), delivered at Swansea Women's Centre by Wales Probation staff with support from Changing Lives. This intervention is focussed on issues affecting women's offending behaviour. Its aims are to provide an empowering environment, assist problem identification and solving, encourage skill development and enhance women's understanding of the community resources available to them.

It's really good to come somewhere where I can talk freely...

Woman taking part in women's specified activity requirement³¹

Wales Probation introduced a number of specialist training packages and initiated research to improve understanding of women offenders.³² The Sex Worker Research Wales project, for example, was carried out jointly by the Centre for Criminal Justice and Criminology at Swansea University and Gibran, a social enterprise working with women ex-offenders across Wales. It

sought to map the locations of sex workers across Wales and to examine their perceptions as well as those of the general public and agencies involved, including the police and NHS. The study found sex workers in all 22 local authority areas (mainly concentrated in Newport, Cardiff and Swansea), two thirds of whom are women. It found that off-street sex work is largely invisible to agencies working in the field. The research called for a multi-agency approach, with greater understanding of the needs and perceptions of the sex workers themselves.³³

Women-only unpaid work placements were introduced by Wales Probation in 2013, as well as the option for women offenders to report to a female officer throughout their sentence. In Gwent, where this way of working was first adopted, there was a 30% reduction in the number of women offenders given short-term custodial sentences.³⁴

Without these services and interventions, there is no doubt that more women offenders would reoffend.

Probation Officer, Wales Probation³⁵

IOM Cymru Women's Pathfinder Project

IOM Cymru is one of the most ambitious implementations of IOM in the UK, spanning all four police forces in Wales, as well as 22 community safety partnerships, Wales probation, Welsh government, Welsh prisons and seven Local Health Boards.

IOM (Integrated Offender Management) is the term used to describe a multi-agency approach to managing persistent offenders who commit a lot of crime, causing damage and nuisance to communities. The approach recognises that repeat offenders often have multiple problems which contribute to their offending and that these cannot be addressed by a single agency such as probation but require input from non-criminal justice agencies.³⁶

The Women's Pathfinder project was commissioned in late 2011, following successful pilots by Wales Probation and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Cymru. Results had been positive with a reported 71% reduction in arrests for North West Wales IOM offenders and 50% reduction in burglary for Cardiff IOM offenders, but the pilots had not included women.

Recognising this, the Women's Pathfinder project was launched in 2013 to deliver a distinct, whole-system approach for women offenders. The operating model includes early assessment of needs and diversion if appropriate (triage), pre-sentence engagement, sentencing options for court, female multi-agency hubs and coordinated case management systems. All Wales police forces are taking part.

The Pathfinder is focussed on the following three objectives:

- **reducing arrests:** in 2012-13, 10,545 women were arrested in Wales – this accounts for 16% of all arrests and equates to 29 women arrested each day³⁷
- **diversion from custody:** the Pathfinder will divert women away from short-term custody where appropriate and improve resettlement services³⁸

- **improving community provision:** the Pathfinder will improve service provision for women serving community sentences and for those leaving prison.

The IOM Cymru Women's Pathfinder Project Manager considers that all the nine pathways for reducing reoffending would benefit from being developed more specifically to meet the needs of female offenders throughout Wales, that services would benefit from better coordination and additional provision of triage, and that more support is needed around sex working and domestic violence where there are identified gaps.

Barriers that the Pathfinder is looking to overcome include:

- fragmented funding arrangements for women's services
- barriers to access for generic services for women
- small numbers of women in a predominantly male service.

Research, monitoring and evaluation frameworks have been built into the project from the start, and in 2014-15 it is piloting the whole-system approach in Cardiff with a view to rolling out across Wales.

Dyfed-Powys Police are fully engaged with the Women's Pathfinder project and reported that a custody suite in their area was being evaluated for a women offender triage pilot. It is their intention to participate fully in the development of the best practice operating model that is being developed by IOM Cymru for women offenders, recognising some of the unique circumstances that lead to women offending. The force will then seek to implement this model across its custody estate in due course.

Delegates at the SI Wales South Action Research meeting, including third sector representatives and several South Wales magistrates said they are looking forward to the full introduction of the IOM Cymru Women's Pathfinder in the Dyfed-Powys police area. They felt that there was insufficient knowledge of help available and poor transparency across agencies and hoped that the Pathfinder would implement a much-needed holistic approach and appropriate infrastructure, and make the most of the third sector. Interest was expressed in extending the Invisible Walls project being developed by Parc Prison for male offenders to offer support for women too. Delegates identified funding constraints, a lack of trust and joint working between different professionals as problems that should be addressed, and emphasised the need for more effective collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION:

- A Welsh government Minister should be designated to lead development of the All-Wales Women's Pathfinder project, including ensuring it is adequately resourced, the pan-Wales roll-out happens as planned and its objective of improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system is met.

2) The approach advocated by the Women's Pathfinder has yet to influence much of the police response to women offenders

Dyfed-Powys

Dyfed-Powys Police Forces' current arrangements include an arrest or referral scheme which is available to all detainees, women and men, and provides support for those with drug and/or alcohol problems. It is underpinned by regular visits to custody suites by local support workers from the current contract provider. Services in the area include Hafan Cymru, a supported housing association for vulnerable women and children, community partnerships and drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys is concerned about under-reporting of domestic and sexual violence in the area. He wants to strengthen confidence in the police with improved recording and cross-agency liaison between police, health services and community groups. Greater inter-organisation collaboration and understanding is needed, requiring leadership, investment and training.

Delegates at a Dyfed-Powys action research meeting were concerned about the lack of service coordination and collaboration across the region, and considered the role that an All-Wales Constabulary could play in improving consistency of approach across the country.

South Wales

South Wales Police has in place a number of schemes that, whilst not gender-specific, can particularly benefit women:

- sex worker support schemes (two different models working in Swansea and Cardiff)
- youth diversionary schemes for under-18s including girls (different models in Swansea, Cardiff and Bridgend)
- integrated offender intervention services (IOIS) referral schemes for people with drug misuse problems.

SI Action Research meeting delegates said that they would like to:

- improve relationships between schools and social services
- see more effective Personal and Social Education in schools
- publicise the help already available
- achieve funding support for longer periods and consistently
- make more use of one-stop shops
- achieve all-Wales coordination
- ensure health centres have information about appropriate services for women.

In its 2012-16 Strategic Equality Plan, South Wales Police committed to conduct research to establish a baseline of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of women detained in police custody, with a view to developing a "strategic equality objective to design and implement appropriate initiatives to meet the specific needs of women who are detained in custody."³⁹

Gwent

In Gwent there is a generic triage system that seeks to ensure offenders are referred to the appropriate agency. Local services for women include Gibran (a social enterprise service for women offenders), drug and alcohol rehabilitation, Women's Refuge and Women's Aid.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent highlighted that awareness and functioning of existing provision could be improved to deliver more effective support. He wanted to see more joint working across organisations, an agreed set of outcomes to focus activity, and pooled budgets to provide services. He proposed that co-location of service providers would assist planning and delivery, reduce duplication and improve partnership working. His office's commissioning methodology is intended to redress confusion and duplication in Gwent. Constraints identified include:

- lack of strategic direction at the political level
- distribution of funding and tasks to a range of organisations
- austerity impacts
- confused landscape (though the PCC is working to improve this)
- challenges of partnership working around common outcomes.

Practitioners told Soroptimists that they would welcome a triage scheme to ensure women apprehended by the police are referred to appropriate agencies and given the opportunity to address any underlying problems, as well as preventative work with women at risk of offending. They highlighted lack of funding for some crucial services as a constraint. They also expressed frustration that women offenders are not a popular subject for discussion and that there is a general unwillingness to look at causes and cures. Delegates believed a cultural shift is required across agencies and the public if lasting change is to be achieved.

North Wales

North Wales Police reported that in 2013-14 2,442 women (compared to 12,016 men) were arrested in this police force area. There is no designated lead on women and as yet they do not have specific procedures for responding to women at first point of contact, apart from those in the Guidance on the Safer Detention and Handling of Persons in Police Custody.⁴⁰ The North Wales Integrated Offender Management Unit (IOMU) refers all its women clients to appropriate women's services and the force is introducing a wraparound service that will involve a needs assessment for each person in custody

All officers receive training on mental health and domestic abuse, including how to identify and deal with vulnerable people, and what special measures to put in place. There are no women-specific protocols for referrals. Depending on the level of vulnerability, a detainee may see a social worker or nurse while in custody who will make suitable referrals. Drug and alcohol workers are based in custody suites and there is an out-of-hours referral process when they are not there.

North Wales Police are looking to adopt best practice from the Women's Pathfinder being trialled in South Wales, which would enable the IOMU and custody suites to offer a better support and referral package to women offenders.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The College of Policing should develop national guidance identifying good practice when working with women offenders. This should include appointment of a designated women's lead in each force, adopting a women-specific approach to risk assessment, staff training, diversionary measures and referral to local support services. Best practice models identified by the Women's Pathfinder should be applied pan-Wales as soon as possible.
- Police training, protocols and diversionary measures concerning or aimed at vulnerable people more generally should take explicit account of women's specific needs and characteristics. Lessons learned from protocols on the treatment of women victims of crime should be applied to the treatment of women offenders to tackle the artificial distinction often made between these groups, and improve outcomes for women.

3) Despite support for women's community services, funding is limited and short-term and rural provision is a challenge

The feedback received from all the agencies approached indicates that lack of funding is the fundamental issue here. In order to maintain and develop the services available at present it is necessary to know that funding will be available to continue, and to be secure in the future.

SI Cheshire, North Wales & Wirral

Three women's centres operating as part of the Women's Turnaround Project, and North Wales Women's Centre, appear in the UK government's 2013 Stocktake of Women's Services for Offenders in the Community, where it is also stated that "[o]utreach services are provided in a further ten areas" in Wales.⁴¹ NOMS/Ministry of Justice funding for such services is only assured until March 2015.⁴²

Women's Turnaround Service

The Women's Turnaround Project⁴³ was commissioned by NOMS Cymru and launched in Cardiff in 2007 in response to the Corston report, to provide Welsh women offenders and women at risk of being an offender and/or victim of crime with a multi-agency, community based service that addresses individual risks and needs.⁴⁴ Having received further funding from a variety of sources, the Women's Turnaround Service is now delivered in Swansea and Cardiff by Changing Lives (formerly the Cyrenians) who took over the service from Platform 51 (now the Young Women's Trust), and in North Wales by KIM Inspire.⁴⁵

Swansea and Cardiff

South Wales staff provide information, guidance and support tailored to individual needs in a friendly, women-only environment. Over a 12 week period, they aim to reduce women's risk of offending by providing a range of services targeted at the nine pathways into offending.

Chrysalis, for example, is an eight week programme which aims to address the barriers to entering education, training & employment, and to equip women with the motivation, skills and knowledge to make informed, positive lifestyle choices. It is delivered one-to-one at probation offices and community venues and in group sessions.

In Cardiff, the Service is part of the Women's Pathfinder and runs a hub, with probation and support services co-located, providing a coordinated response to women's needs and clear referral pathways to other specialist services.

North Wales

KIM Inspire delivers the Women's Turnaround Service on behalf of Changing Lives both at their base in Holywell, Flintshire and through outreach services across the region. The KIM Turnaround Service offers flexible, holistic support for women who have offended or who are potentially at risk of offending across the North Wales area, providing a lifeline for vulnerable women in rural localities. Women can be referred through probation, police, IOM teams, Jobcentre Plus and other agencies and service providers, with trained staff providing information, guidance and support tailored to individual needs in a friendly and women-only environment. Having developed good partnership working with relevant statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and criminal justice agencies, the service can signpost women to appropriate services, so that women can access and engage with community provision.

Women's groups, focused on enabling women to build self-confidence and learn new life skills, are offered at different community locations, including libraries, in Gwynedd and on Anglesey. Most recently held in Bangor (May-July 2014), the next groups are planned for Anglesey and Pwllheli.

Apart from these services and Gibran UK, all of which are profiled in this section, women-specific services in Wales appear to focus on domestic abuse, including women's refuges run by Women's Aid. Hafan Cymru offers housing and support to vulnerable women across Wales, especially those escaping domestic violence, and floating support to women with offending histories.

Gibran UK

Gibran UK is a social enterprise working with women ex-offenders across Wales. In 2013 it completed its five-year GOING HOME project which supported 465 women and engaged with women in all 22 local authority areas in Wales, piloted work in magistrates' courts and diversion with Gwent Police. It saved the tax payer an estimated £11m for every 100 women it supported. The organisation is now engaged in CONNECT, a two-year project funded by BIG Innovation to work with women ex-offenders across Wales, to support their resettlement, reduce reoffending and help them to find work.⁴⁶

Practitioners, including third sector representatives and several South Wales magistrates, said that they would like Gibran UK's services to be extended and more women's centres in Dyfed-Powys. Lack of funding is a constraint, and the fact that this is a large rural area, with poor transport links, is a challenge. The scarceness of services is also a problem in the Bangor area, where the nearest women's centre, North Wales Women's Centre in Rhyl, is over 30 miles away.

North Wales Women's Centre, Rhyl, Denbighshire

Established in 2001 in the ward ranked highest in the Index of Deprivation in Wales, North Wales Women's Centre "has a history and growing track record of engaging vulnerable women who have difficulties in their lives which may, or has, resulted in them breaking the law."⁴⁷ The centre is run by Rhyl Interactive Limited and delivers a wide range of services and activities helping women improve their health, confidence and livelihoods, including outreach services in more rural areas of Denbighshire and along the North Wales coast. The centre reports that it was recently saved from closure by a £500,000 grant from the Welsh government Equality and Inclusion Grant Funding programme, for the period 2014-17.

The Women's Centre is an essential facility for the Rhyl area and surrounding communities.

SI Rhyl & District

In addition to scarcity of women's centres and other women-specific services across Wales, practitioners identified the lack of women-specific Approved Premises accommodation for women offenders as being detrimental.

Soroptimists identified some generic services that offer potential benefits for women, providing that they monitor their use and impact by gender:

- the Timpson Foundation's Chef Academy and The Oyster Catcher restaurant in Rhosneigr, Isle of Anglesey - launched in 2011, these provide opportunities for men and women in the criminal justice system to gain qualifications
- the All Wales Domestic Abuse helpline (0808 8010800) provides support for women and men affected by domestic abuse
- CAIS - a registered charity offering drug and alcohol treatment services, including residential treatment and rehabilitation, counselling, peer mentoring, supporting people in their homes, assisting people back into work or education and group work. CAIS operates a partnership with Parabl to offer therapeutic services to adults in Gwynedd with mild to moderate mental health needs
- MIND - mental health support and advice
- GISDA - a registered charity providing services to vulnerable young people in several locations across Gwynedd, including supported accommodation
- Nacro - the national crime reduction charity provides services in North Wales including support and training to help people back to work
- Dicartref - an agency for the homeless in Wales.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A national network of women-specific community services, including multi-agency one-stop shops and outreach services, should be funded by government, drawing on cross-departmental budgets on three to five year funding cycles.
- Measures of their effectiveness in working with women offenders and evaluation models should be built into funding agreements, taking account of the methodological difficulties inherent in building an evidence base with small numbers of women.
- Priority should be given to setting up adequate Approved Premises for women in Wales.
- Generic health, housing and other support services should monitor and evaluate take-up and impact by gender.

4) There is a lack of women-specific health services

In South Caernarfon, accessibility to sustained mental health services was found to be very limited. Cuts in public services are causing significant problems locally, as well as adversely affecting accessibility in this large geographical area.

SI Wales South members wrote to all six Local Health Boards in South Wales. Whilst some responses made reference to services delivered as part of Criminal Justice Liaison Services, delivery of women-specific health services was limited, despite guidance “setting out the minimum levels of service required in each Local Health Board (LHB) area.”⁴⁸

- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board said that when a woman is arrested with markers for mental health on her arrest record, criminal justice practitioners are informed, carry out a screening assessment and take appropriate action. In 2013, 21 women were referred and screened. Services available include a dedicated women-only forensic rehabilitation ward (6 beds) as part of the pathway from secure services, and a Personality Disorder service with a pathway in conjunction with probation services.
- Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board work closely with the Criminal Justice Liaison Service for men in Swansea Prison and Parc Prison but have no specific arrangements for women. Short-term therapeutic interventions are offered and there are close links with third sector organisations for signposting to further advice and support (e.g. substance misuse, domestic abuse and housing). If a woman wishes to see a female member of staff this can be arranged. Services are offered via GP surgeries, not on a women-only basis. This Board reported that there are opportunities to improve care arrangements for women offenders with mental health disorders and develop links with HMP Eastwood Park similar to those already in place for male offenders with HMPs Parc, Cardiff and Usk.

- Cardiff & Vale University Health Board does not offer specific services for women offenders. There is a Cardiff Health Access Practice (CHAP) for those deemed vulnerable and high-risk groups who are unable to register with other primary care services.
- Cwm Taf University Health Board reported that women offenders have full access to the Criminal Justice Liaison Service for mental health problems. A practitioner based in the police custody suites in Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd proactively screens people on a daily basis. This service is mostly delivered by female practitioners. Further assessment required within normal working hours is undertaken by the Community Mental Health Teams and out-of-hours by the Emergency Duty Teams. Women can attend the Crisis Resolution Teams in Prince Charles or Royal Glamorgan Hospitals. This extends to women going through the court system, usually supported by female staff in both the Merthyr and Pontypridd courts. The service supports women at HMP Eastwood Park and helps them prepare for release. Practitioners provide services for women who are having reports written for Court, and those on mental health orders who are under the care of probation. Mental Health Assessment Clinics are held every two weeks at Merthyr and Pontypridd Probation offices.

The high level of female referrals into the practitioners when compared to the overall number of women offenders generally...It is clear that many women...in the criminal justice system have significant complex, mental health difficulties and end up in custody for less serious offences than men.

Cwm Taf University Health Board

Practitioners acknowledged that the lack of women-specific accommodation in Wales impacted on women with health needs, with Cwm Taf University Health Board commenting that access to accommodation with criminal justice and mental health input as an alternative to custodial remand or short custodial sentences would improve care for women in their area.

Services are aligned to the Offender Mental Health Care Pathway with access available at all points of the journey through the criminal justice system. We acknowledge that Welsh women are disadvantaged by having no female prison in Wales and limited access to Approved Premises for women when compared to men.

Cwm Taf University Health Board

- Hywel Dda University Health Board provides Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) services in Carmarthen, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire which are delivered by third sector organisations. Individuals in the criminal justice system who have drug misuse problems are offered drug-testing on arrest, referral to advice services and liaison on release from prison. There is no equivalent service for those with alcohol-related problems, although some providers do deliver alcohol-awareness sessions for those caught speeding. Women-only groups are provided on request.

- Powys Teaching Health Board reported that there is a liaison service between Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT) and the police. This includes arrest referrals and court diversion support from Community Psychiatric Nurses directly at a police station. Gender-specific arrangements are not routinely provided but can be organised according to the specific needs of the individual.

Women have more problems as a consequence of domestic abuse and we work closely with dedicated services.

Powys Teaching Health Board

In adult mental health services, women come via direct referral from the custody sergeant to the CMHT. Each CMHT has a designated nurse for this role who in turn covers all the police stations in Powys. Other support services, including safe houses for victims of domestic abuse, are available via probation and the local authority. Kaleidoscope provides a full range of substance misuse services for adults and young people.

This Board thought the current system for adult mental health services was working well, although availability of a nurse is sometimes delayed if other assessments are underway at the time of contact. For substance misuse, the Board wants to develop day services and services that are more accessible to older people.

recommend...that further work is done, including follow through with other voluntary

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Health services, including mental health and substance misuse, must recognise and address women's distinct needs and characteristics.
- The Welsh government should undertake an audit of Local Health Board provision delivered as part of criminal justice liaison services to ensure Boards are providing the minimum level of services required by guidance and the distinct needs of women are identified and met.
- Health services aligned to the Offender Mental Health Care Pathway should recognise women's journey through the criminal justice system as it differs to men's and provide access points reflecting this distinction.

ANNEX 1 - SUMMARY OF CLUB ACTIVITIES

ENGLAND

Local and regional SI events

SI England and the Prison Reform Trust held a Parliamentary reception in the House of Commons on 25 April 2013 to mark the publication of the Action Pack to Reduce Women's Imprisonment. Soroptimists representing clubs across the country attended and speakers included Lord Woolf (Prison Reform Trust chair), Jan Hemlin (then Soroptimist UKPAC chair), Juliet Lyon CBE (Prison Reform Trust director), Lord McNally, (then Minister of State for Justice and Deputy Leader in the House of Lords) and Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws QC, FRSA.

SIs Midland Chase and Midland Arden held a joint Action Research meeting in November 2013 attended by Yvonne Mosquito, Deputy PCC for the West Midlands; Barbara Sykes JP, a magistrate at Dudley Courthouse; Joy Doal, Chief Executive Officer of Anawim women's centre, Birmingham; Sara Ward of Sandwell Women's Aid; Vanessa Francis, Probation Officer for the Mariposa Project at Sandwell Women's Aid; Adele Brown, Probation Officer (Women's Champion) Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust; Councillor Yvonne Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

SI Southern England held a morning conference on 21 March 2014 exploring the impact of women's imprisonment and the alternatives. There were three speakers:

- a member of HMP Send Family Link who explained their work and the impact of imprisonment, particularly on children, the wider family, and their future
- a speaker from Women's Wisdom talking about the work the charity has undertaken with women offenders both in the community and pre-release in prison
- Mitch Egan CB spoke on behalf of the Women's Justice Taskforce.

SI Bristol held a conference Reducing Women's Imprisonment – Diverting Women from Custody on 9 September 2013 which aimed to:

- raise awareness of what is available for non-violent women in Bristol caught up or at risk of being caught up in the criminal justice system to divert them from custody and to serve their sentence in the community
- raise awareness of how sentencers come to their decisions
- ask those who can influence change to support the Soroptimists' project and increase the number of women's centres and bail hostels to allow more women to serve their sentence in the community.

There were 140 delegates registered including Soroptimists from ten clubs, judges, magistrates, NHS England, Bristol City Council Health Scrutiny Committee members, Bristol dignitaries, health care and criminal justice professionals and others. Bristol SI members were pleased that this event helped to raise awareness of the need for more women's centres and bail hostels in the area, and more female accommodation has since become available. Local MPs are looking at the state of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system. People in Bristol are still talking

by email, in person, and in the media about what the Soroptimists are trying to achieve. Delegates found the conference stimulating and invaluable. The conference gained extensive local media coverage.

Clubs within **SI North West England** held a number of awareness-raising events, involving speakers including a former governor of a women's prison, Juliet Lyon of the Prison Reform Trust, Maureen Thompson from Tomorrow's Women Wirral and service users.

SI Canterbury, Folkestone and Ashford held a focus group on 27 February 2014 attended by representatives from the police, magistrates, probation, prison, local authority, housing, health and mental health services and voluntary sector.

Lobbying

Some Soroptimist clubs wrote to their local MPs about the campaign, to raise awareness and obtain information. As a result, MPs wrote to ministers about the Soroptimists' concerns and replies were received from Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander MP, the Secretary of State for Justice, The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP and the successive Justice Ministers with responsibility for women in the criminal justice system, Helen Grant MP, The Rt Hon Lord McNally and The Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP.

Supporting local services

A number of SI clubs were already involved in supporting local services for vulnerable women, including volunteering and fundraising. More activity is planned or underway, including:

- in **Heswall (Wirral)**, 21 Soroptimists volunteer at Tomorrow's Women Wirral, two are part of the conditional cautioning process and Maureen Thompson of SI Heswall is the chair of the Board
- **SI Norwich** members volunteer at The 4 Women Centre in Norwich, including teaching knitting skills and donating wool and thread or other materials which are being used by the women to make things to use or sell
- **SI Derby** members are currently working with their local probation service to offer bi-monthly one-stop shops with a variety of agencies attending and the Soroptimists hosting and providing refreshments. It is planned that this will lead to some mentoring work. SI Derby also puts on a number of courses at the local women's centres around confidence building and back-to-work activities, and are liaising with probation to see if there are courses they can put on for women on probation
- funding from the **SI Bradford club** has enabled Together Women (TWP) to employ a Parenting and Childcare Development Worker at the Bradford Centre and Family Resettlement Worker at New Hall Women's Prison. The project will provide childcare while mothers access the centre's services, and deliver a special programme to help disadvantaged mums improve their parenting skills. It will also deliver specialist support to women in prison to help them maintain contact with their families⁴⁹

- Soroptimists help out at the **Nottingham Women's Centre** Job Club and have raised funds for specific purposes at the centre - two Soroptimists are on the centre's board
- following a talk at a Regional Council Meeting by Canon Jane Clay about her work as chaplain in HMP New Hall and HMP Askham Grange, **Yorkshire Soroptimists** decided to donate good quality clothing for the charity shops within the prisons. Collections will be made at regional meetings over the coming years and taken to the prisons by the SI volunteers who offer their service, skills and time. Toiletries and other essentials such as sleeping bags and coats will be donated for the vulnerable women who attend the Tomorrow's Women Wirral Service and other local women's centres
- **SI Swindon** members are visiting the new Swindon Isis Women's Centre to see how they may be of help. They hope that lobbying will help persuade the government to make more funding available not only to increase the services available at the centre but also to make outreach services available throughout Wiltshire
- Soroptimists in **South East England** made donations to Brighton Women's Centre and Tunbridge Wells Women's Refuge and are offering ongoing support. SI Canterbury, Folkestone and Ashford have made a donation towards IT equipment to Rebuilders, a Kent-based organisation supporting vulnerable women with convictions find employment and accommodation. They are in active discussions with the probation service regarding contributing creative sessions to the women's probation groups, and one-on-one mentoring to support women on probation
- **SI Manchester** members are in regular contact with Community Outreach staff at Styal Prison. Facilities at the prison include an unused large workshop, which has all the facilities to provide meaningful employment for the women. They are appealing for the wider business community to consider setting up a business venture in partnership with the prison. SI members have agreed to promote this locally
- members of **SI Bristol** are Trustees of Eden House Women's Centre and others volunteer there
- **SI Southampton** members are volunteering to help Women's Wisdom and to raise funds for them
- **SI Greater London** has made donations to The Wise Project and supported many charitable events. SI members will be volunteering as mentors and befrienders for women released from prison.

WALES

SI Wales and the Prison Reform Trust held a reception in the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay on 15 May 2013 to mark the publication of the Action Pack to Reduce Women's Imprisonment. Soroptimists representing clubs across the country attended and speakers included Jane Hutt AM (Vale of Glamorgan), Professor Mike Maguire (University of Glamorgan), Jan Hemlin (then UKPAC chair), Jenny Earle and Juliet Lyon CBE, (Prison Reform Trust).

SI Wales South held an Action Research meeting on 8 December 2013 which was attended by all 19 SI clubs in South Wales as well as Wendy Hyett, project manager of IOM Cymru, and representatives from women's centres (Hafan Cymru, Changing Lives and Gibran) and magistrates.

At the invitation of the IOM Cymru team, **SI Wales South** members participated in the Women's Pathfinder Project Workshop (9 December 2013) and the Women Offenders Executive Summit (27 March 2014). In addition, Soroptimists were represented at the launch of the Criminal Justice Liaison Services (CJLS) Policy Implementation Guidance⁵⁰ (27 November 2013) and a symposium on Transforming Rehabilitation (17 December 2013).

Some clubs in Wales South received presentations from third sector organisations involved with offenders in their localities and Clive Chatterton, a former women's prison governor.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The **SINI** working group received positive and constructive responses from all the organisations and individuals contacted, with some indicating that ongoing support/collaboration from SINI would be welcome (e.g. NIACRO). The working group intend to recommend to SINI that further work is done, including follow through with other voluntary sector organisations working with women offenders (e.g. Barnardo's, Extern, women's centres), with whom contact has already been established but where there has not been sufficient time to follow through. A specific project may then be identified.

SCOTLAND

SI Scotland and the Prison Reform Trust held a reception in the Scottish Parliament on 12 June 2013 to mark the publication of the Action Pack to Reduce Women's Imprisonment. Soroptimists representing clubs across the country attended and speakers included Kenny MacAskill MSP (then Cabinet Secretary for Justice); Rhoda Grant MSP (Highlands and Islands); Sarah Roberts (Families Outside); Wendy Spencer (218/Turning Point); Jan Hemlin (UKPAC); Juliet Lyon (Prison Reform Trust).

The Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending (SWGWO) has been immensely supportive of the Soroptimists' project. Anne Pinkman, the chair of this group, has invited a UKPAC representative to attend the group to represent Soroptimists, and coordinated production and circulation of a leaflet⁵¹ providing statistics on women in the criminal justice system in Scotland.

National conference, April 2014

A national conference was jointly held by SI Scotland North and Scotland South.

Fife open meeting, February 2014

SI Kirkcaldy and SI Dunfermline held a joint open meeting on 24 February 2014 with speakers including:

- Baroness Linklater of Butterstone
- Dan Gunn, retired Director of Operations Scottish Prison Service
- Angela Simpson, Women Offenders Team, Fife Council
- Colette Wormleighton, the Willow Project, Edinburgh
- Jacky Close, Families Outside, Dundee
- Lyn Herbert, Solicitor (Chair).

A UKPAC representative represented Soroptimists at a meeting organised by the **Robertson Trust**. This follows on from the discussions Soroptimists had with the Trust about their plans to develop community-based centres in Scotland to support vulnerable women, girls and families. Discussion covered:

- the existing landscape in Scotland in terms of the support currently available for vulnerable women, girls and families
- any particular challenges/issues that vulnerable women, girls and families experience
- gaps in services for these groups and any opportunities to build on existing community-based approaches to supporting them
- whether there are any particular communities where there is the need, appetite and capacity to develop a community-based centre.

Members of **SI Glasgow City** have agreed to support Tomorrow's Women Glasgow through an initial two-year funded project with supplies for the centre's daily breakfast service. The club's charities fund will also provide regular monies to TWG as an emergency fund for the service users.

SI Glasgow City members would like to explore the content of information and education related specifically to women offenders which is provided to Scottish magistrates, sheriffs and Justice of the Peace officers. Initial approaches to educational establishments are in process. This could lead to advocacy work by club members depending on the information received and analysed.

SI Perth is looking at how Soroptimists can support the work of OWLS (One-stop Women's Learning Service). There are volunteering opportunities for members to be involved with the various activities and group work.

SI Stirling will support the HMP & YOI Cornton Vale family hub until the prison closes in 2018, and will encourage other local groups such as Rotary to do so as well. In April 2014, SI Stirling were invited to give a presentation on women in prison to a local Rotary Club.

SI Crieff have supported HMP & YOI Cornton Vale since 2009-10, visiting prisoners and staff and providing much-needed equipment, including: toys for the family unit; cots and sensory equipment for the mother and baby unit; and sanitary wares and toiletries for women on remand.

SI clubs in **Scotland North**, led by region chair Billie Wealleans, attend the Cross Party group on Children and Families affected by Imprisonment, convened by Mary Fee MSP.⁵²

There is an appetite in a number of clubs across Scotland to continue to work in this area.

REGION CHAIRS AND OFFICERS OF UKPAC October 2013-October 2014

ROLE	NAME
Chair	Jan Hemlin
Vice Chair (South Lancashire Rep)	Margaret Molyneux
Treasurer	Eileen Griffiths
Secretary	Jan Doyle
Website/Promotion	Heather Knott
Cheshire, North Wales and Wirral	Sue Challoner and Helen Owen
London Anglia	Jean Thorpe
London Chilterns	Yinka Soetan
Midland Arden	Patricia Martin
Midland Chase	Sue Nickson
Midland East	Barbara McDonald
NW England & Isle of Man	Ruth Bruce
Northern England	Gill Smith
Northern Ireland	Joanna McVey
Scotland North	Billie Wealleans
Scotland South	Margaret Mowat
South East England	Ann Reeves
South West and Channel Islands	Irene Hockin
Southern England	Christine White
Wales South	Kay Richmond
Yorkshire	Chris Clark
Lobbyists	
Northern Ireland	Irene Miskimmon
Scotland	Audrey Harvey
Wales	Farida Patel

ANNEX 2 - CONTRIBUTORS

The following individuals and agencies, amongst others, provided information to Soroptimists by completing questionnaires, giving interviews, taking part in group discussion or speaking at local and regional events:

ENGLAND

Central government and national agencies

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Justice

Helen Grant MP, (then) Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice with responsibility for women in the justice system

The Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP, Minister of State for Justice and Civil Liberties

Ministry of Justice

National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

Crown Prosecution Service

Police

Avon and Somerset Police

Cheshire Police

Cumbria Constabulary

Derbyshire Constabulary

Devon and Cornwall Police

Essex Police

Greater Manchester Police

Hampshire Police

Hertfordshire Police

Humberside Police

Kent Police

Leicestershire Police

North Yorkshire Police

Northumbria Police

Nottinghamshire Police

South Yorkshire Police

West Midlands Police

West Yorkshire Police

Police and Crime Commissioners

PCC for Suffolk

PCC for Essex

PCC for Kent

PCC for West Midlands

PCC for Staffordshire

Deputy PCC for Nottinghamshire

Deputy PCC for the West Midlands

Assistant PCC for Lancashire

Prisons

Volunteers and the chaplain at HMP New Hall
Volunteers and the chaplain at HMP Askham Grange
[Midland Chase] prisons
HMP East Sutton Park
A representative from prison education, SE England
HMP Styal prisoners and staff
HMP Eastwood Park
HMP Send – women’s prison Family Link
HMP Peterborough

Magistrates

A Cheshire magistrate
Norwich magistrates
Courts in Midland Chase region
Magistrates in Yorkshire
Magistrates’ Association in SE England/local magistrates
East Kent magistrates
South Lancashire judges and magistrates
[Hertford] magistrate
Hampshire magistrates
Magistrates from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire
A selection of West Midlands courts

Probation⁵³

Avon and Somerset Probation Trust
Cumbria Probation Trust
Derbyshire Probation Trust
Devon and Cornwall Probation Trust
Hampshire Probation Trust
Kent Probation Trust
Lancashire Probation Trust
Merseyside Probation Trust
Northamptonshire Probation Trust
Northumbria Probation Trust
Nottinghamshire Probation Trust
Probation and Housing, Sevenoaks Council
Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust
Thames Valley Probation Trust
Yorkshire Probation Trust

Women’s community services

Tomorrow’s Women Wirral and other women’s centres in Cheshire and Wirral
Halton Women’s Centre, Runcorn
Stepping Stones, Luton
Safer Places women’s refuge, Hertford

Living Room centre for people with addictions, Hertfordshire
[Midland Chase] women's centres
Lancashire Women's Centres
Together Women Project, Bradford
WomenCentre (Evolve), Halifax and Huddersfield and other women's centres in Yorkshire
Brighton Women's Centre
Rising Sun Domestic Violence and Abuse Service, SE England
Porchlight (homelessness charity), SE England
Turning Point (alcohol and drug treatment service), SE England
East Kent Rapeline
Women's centres in Huddersfield, Bolton, Birkenhead and Bootle
Eden House Women's Centre, Bristol
Women's Wisdom (women's employment group), Southern England
Aurora New Dawn (domestic violence victim support), Southern England
POW (Prostitute Outreach Work), Nottingham
Dawn Project, Cambridge Women's Resource Centre
CHANGES project, Nottingham Women's Centre
Zinthiya Trust, Leicester
New Dawn New Day, Leicester
Gloucester Women's Centre
Isis Women's Centre, Swindon
Sandwell Women's Aid, Mariposa Project
Anawim women's centre, Birmingham
A women's centre in Cumbria

Others

Health and Wellbeing Boards, Safeguarding Children Boards and MPs in Midland Chase
[Southern England] MPs
Greg Clark MP, Tunbridge Wells
Yorkshire youth justice practitioners
SE England IMB members
SE England Community Liaison Officer
SE England local councillor
Derby City Council
Kent County Council
Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery, SE England
U3A (University of the Third Age), SE England
CAB (Citizen's Advice Bureau), SE England
PACT and Just People
POPS (Partners of Prisoners)
Action for Prisoners' Families
Catholic Diocese of Liverpool
Anglican Mothers' Union – Manchester Diocese
North Somerset Children's Services
Mitch Egan CB, Criminal Justice Consultant

Inquest
[Health and Social Care], Leicester
Severn Health Surgery, Leicester
Children's Services, North Somerset
National Treatment Agency (for substance misuse)
Institute for Criminal Policy Research, Birkbeck College

WALES

Information was provided to SI members by many organisations and individuals, including:

- Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru
- Gibran
- Changing Lives
- Hafan Cymru
- magistrates
- Gwent Police
- PCC for Gwent
- Dyfed-Powys Police
- PCC for Dyfed-Powys
- South Wales Police and the PCC for South Wales (via IOM)
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board
- Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
- Cwm Taf University Health Board
- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Powys Teaching Health Board
- women's services in North Wales.

NORTHERN IRELAND

SINI's research included an exchange of letters with the Justice Minister, David Ford MLA, and meetings with:

- Deputy Director of the Criminal Justice Service (DOJNI)
- Probation Board of Northern Ireland (PBNI) Inspire project manager
- representatives from Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) - NIACRO also helped with follow up queries by email
- plus a questionnaire completed on behalf of PSNI.

SCOTLAND

Information was provided to Soroptimists by the following, amongst others:

- Criminal Justice Authorities
- Criminal Justice Social Work Departments
- Local Authorities
- Police
- Health Service

- Scottish Working Group on Women's Offending (SWGWO)
- Sacro
- Circle Scotland
- Families Outside
- Positive Prison/Positive Futures

- a Scottish Executive representative
- Police Scotland
- NHS Fife
- Fife Police

- Perth Prison
- prison visitors
- HMP & YOI Cornton Vale
- NHS Scotland.

ANNEX 3 - POLICY BACKGROUND

A series of inquiries and reports, most notably the 2000 report of the Prison Reform Trust's Committee on Women's Imprisonment (the Wedderburn Report), the 2007 Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System (the Corston Report), the 2011 report of the Women's Justice Taskforce (Reforming Women's Justice), and the Scottish government's Commission on Women Offenders in 2012, have all concluded that prison is rarely a necessary, appropriate or proportionate response to women who get caught up in the criminal justice system. The Justice Select Committee concluded from its inquiry into women offenders that "prison is an expensive and ineffective way of dealing with many women offenders who do not pose a significant risk of harm to public safety." The Committee called for "a significant increase in residential alternatives to custody as well as the maintenance of the network of women's centres" which are seen as "more effective, and cheaper...than short custodial sentences."⁵⁴ However, despite cross-party support in all jurisdictions for alternative approaches there has been limited progress. Where effective services have been developed, there are real concerns about their sustainability due to limited, short-term funding streams.

The Prison Reform Trust's programme to reduce women's imprisonment is providing fresh momentum for reform, and working alongside civil society organisations such as the Soroptimists and the National Council of Women has allowed new voices to be heard. This collaborative work has also brought an important local dimension to the endeavour which is critical because it is local police, courts and support services that hold the key to changing women's lives for the better as much as national policy frameworks and laws.

Baroness Corston's report to government set out a blueprint for the reform of women's justice in England and Wales⁵⁵ covering the following themes:

- improve health services and support for women offenders
- make community disposals the norm and develop a wider network of one-stop shop community provision for women offenders and those at risk of offending
- reserve custody for serious and violent women offenders and place those in small, local units within 10 years
- improve prison conditions
- improve high level governance and cross-departmental working for women offenders and those at risk of offending.

The Corston report's findings were accepted almost entirely by the (then) government in Westminster, and have influenced the development of women's justice in Northern Ireland⁵⁶ and the 2012 Commission on Women Offenders chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini, whose recommendations were accepted in large part by the Scottish government.⁵⁷

The UN Committee overseeing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has expressed concern about the disproportionate imprisonment of women for non-violent offences, and recently urged the UK Government to implement the recommendations of the Corston and Angiolini reports and improve community services for women.⁵⁸

ENDNOTES

- 1 Extract from a response to the Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo MP (Bristol South) dated 23 May 2013, replying to a letter sent on behalf of SI Bristol
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- 7 www.swscja.org.uk/download-document/459-women-in-the-cj-system.html
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- 19 www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/welsh-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/prisons-in-wales-treatment-of-welsh-offenders/
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- 26 Griffiths v Secretary of State for Justice (Equality and Human Rights Commission intervening); Coll v Secretary of State for Justice (Equality and Human Rights Commission intervening) [2013] EWHC 4077 (Admin)
- 27 National Offender Management Service (2013) *Commissioning Intentions From 2014* London: NOMS
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- 30 www.wales.nhs.uk/news/30021

- 31 <http://walesprobationtrust.gov.uk/news/2013/09/18/womens-specified-activity-requirement-and-womens-reporting-centre-launched/>
- 32 <http://walesprobationtrust.gov.uk/news/2013/03/08/international-womens-day-gender-agenda-gains-momentum/>
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- 34 <http://walesprobationtrust.gov.uk/news/2013/03/08/international-womens-day-gender-agenda-gains-momentum/>
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- 36 www.walesprobationtrust.gov.uk/integrated-offender-management/
- 37 Table A05, Home Office Statistical Bulletin, *Police Powers and Procedures England and Wales 2012/2013*
- 38 www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/PressPolicy/News/vw/1/ItemID/187
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- 49 www.togetherwomen.org/news/twp-receive-funding-from-soroptimists
- 50 <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/guidance/criminal/?lang=en>
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Soroptimist International is dedicated to advancing women's equality and improving the lives of women. Following the doubling of the women's prison population between 1995 – 2010, the Soroptimist UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) decided to work in partnership with the Prison Reform Trust to reduce women's imprisonment. Community solutions that enable women to address the causes of their offending are more effective and less damaging for their children and families. Many women in prison have themselves been victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Soroptimists sought information from police, probation, criminal justice social workers, magistrates, sheriffs, health professionals and women's community services across the UK, about what happens locally to women who offend or are at risk of offending.

This report, based on the information gathered, profiles progress and good practice whilst identifying constraints, gaps and shortcomings in local service provision. It is intended as a spur to action, highlighting opportunities to reduce the women's prison population and share learning across jurisdictions. It makes recommendations which, if implemented, would reform women's justice and transform outcomes for women and their communities.

Most of the solutions to women's offending lie outside prison walls in treatment for addictions and mental health problems, protection from domestic violence and coercive relationships, safe housing and employment. Community sentences enable women to take control of their lives, care for their children and address the causes of their offending.

As a Soroptimist perhaps the key message I brought away from this project was that tackling women's offending is not just a matter for the justice system but for society as a whole to address.

Member, SI Lancashire

£15

BARCODE

